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The Great St. Louis Cyclone,

MAY 27TH, 1896,

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As Seen Through a Camera.

BY L. F. HAMMER, JR.,

PHOTOGRAPHER,

1534 SOUTH BROADWAY, ST. LOUIS, MO.

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ST. LOUIS, MO.

— Souvenir of the Cyclone.



IN the afternoon of Wednesday, May 27, 1896, the city of St. Louis, which had always made the proud boast that she enjoyed immunity from danger of cyclones or tornadoes, was visited by the most destructive storm in the history of the country, both in regard to the number of lives lost and the amount of property which was damaged.

In less than an hour, over two hundred lives were crushed out, thousands were more or less injured, and more than fifty millions of dollars' worth of property was destroyed.

The storm was predicted a year before by Rev. Irl Hicks, the local astronomer, and the United States Signal Service sent out warnings several hours in advance of its approach, but the people could not realize the extent of the awful danger that threatened them.

At least three hours before the storm, the atmosphere became sultry and depressing. The wind came in fitful gusts, with periods of dead calm intervening and patches of fluffy clouds went scurrying across the horizon. These continued to pile up until the entire sky was filled with a mass of shell-shaped clouds which assumed a greenish-yellow hue at first, but grew blacker and more ominous looking, until suddenly from out of the northwest came a terrific hurricane, accompanied by unusually severe electrical disturbances, and a perfect deluge of water, which swept through the entire city causing destruction on every side. This lasted for about twenty minutes, when there was a lull of several minutes' duration; then about 5 o'clock there burst upon the city from the southwest an awful tornado, compared with which, the first storm was as a gentle zephyr. This lasted only a few minutes, but it swept through the southern portion of the city, creating sad havoc in its path, and dealing death and destruction on every hand. It was this second storm which caused the great loss of life and property.

From comparatively narrow limits at the Poor House, the path of the storm gradually widened until by the time the river was reached, it extended from the Eads Bridge nearly to Shenandoah Street. Throughout this entire distance, there were very few houses in the path of the tornado which did not sustain more or less damage, while hundreds were totally demolished. Great trees, which had withstood the storms of fifty years, were snapped like twigs, or uprooted, and nothing seemed able to withstand the awful fury of the tempest.

In East St. Louis the devastation was, if possible, worse: that portion known as "the island," being entirely swept away. To add to the horror of the situation on that side of the river, after the storm the district was swept by fire, which completed the work of destruction.

The scenes after the storm were so heart-rending that they will not be effaced from memory in a life-time. Agonized women ran crying through the streets in search of their husbands, brothers or children.

The thirteen buildings of the new plant of the Liggett & Myers Tobacco Company, which were in course of erection, having a frontage of 2,400 feet on Park Avenue and a like frontage on Folsom Avenue, and extending from Lawrence Street to Tower Grove Avenue, were many of them badly wrecked and a number of workmen and girls were buried in the ruins.

Of the 300 solidly built and comparatively new houses on Compton Heights, costing from \$5,000 to \$25,000 each, not one escaped serious damage, and in most of them the furniture, carpets and clothing of the occupants were ruined.

In the territory between Jefferson and Oregon Avenues, from Lafayette Avenue to Shenandoah Street, there are fully 300 houses which were partially or totally demolished, and the most of these residences cost from \$3,000 to \$6,000.

The immense power-house of the Scullin street-car system, one of the finest plants of its kind in the world, was completely wrecked and left a heap of ruins. The elegant churches in that neighborhood were demolished, and the buildings at the South Side Race Track were completely blown away.

Around Nicholson Place and Benton Place, the palatial residences were all unroofed and partially wrecked, and their contents drenched with muddy water. All around the aristocratic residence district in the vicinity of Lafayette and Missouri Avenues the destruction was complete, and the scene of havoc is simply beyond description. Every house in this district suffered severely, and the park, which had the name of being one of the most beautiful small parks in the country, was completely devastated. Statues were overturned, and

only six of the beautiful trees were left standing, these being shorn of many of their limbs and left sadly dilapidated.

From this on east to Ninth Street the district is thickly populated by the middle class of people, and barely a house escaped being partially or totally demolished. The power house of the Peoples' Railway, which was as solid as brick and stone could make it, was a complete wreck.

The City Hospital was almost completely demolished, and temporary quarters had to be provided for the patients. That the death list did not run up into the thousands is simply miraculous. Manufacturing establishments, employing hundreds of hands, were razed to the ground, and yet the total death list in St. Louis was only about two hundred, while in East St. Louis it will foot up only a little over one hundred.

From Ninth Street to Broadway the territory is densely populated by the poorer classes of people, and here the ruin was simply awful. From the ruins of one tenement house on Seventh and Rutger Streets twenty-one bodies were taken out, and on the opposite corner three bodies were found.

A number of people were buried beneath the ruins of Soulard Market, and the old Saxony School, in falling, crushed the cottage of the janitor which adjoined it, killing all of the occupants, consisting of the janitor, his sister, and her two children. The large furniture store of the William Ottenad Furniture Company was reduced to a pile of ruins, and the proprietor, his two sons, the bookkeeper, driver, and a number of others were buried in the ruins. The two little boys were found alive and unhurt in ice boxes beneath the ruins where they had crawled for safety. The bookkeeper was taken out with a broken arm, but the balance were dead. All along South Broadway, from Spruce Street south, the stores were either partially or wholly destroyed, the furniture stores being marked as the especial objects for the fury of the storm, as every furniture store on the street, from Mueller Bros. to Thuner's warehouse, was wrecked.

From Broadway to the river through the old historical part of St. Louis the storm wrought sad havoc, and from Broadway and Spruce Street diagonally across to the Eads Bridge, the district is a mass of ruins. At the plant of the St. Louis Wooden Gutter Co. and Aluminum Bicycle works, after the storm had completed its deadly work, the ruins were swept by fire, which added to the work of destruction.

The entire Levee district from the Eads Bridge to Arsenal Island is a scene of wreck and ruin. Along the river the damage was tremendous, numbers of steamboats, tugs and barges were wrecked and sunk, but the loss of life was remarkably small. Of the entire fleet of the Wiggins Ferry Company, but one boat was fit

for use after the storm. The great Eads Bridge, which is considered one of the wonders of the world, was badly damaged, and the eastern approach totally wrecked. A passenger train was caught in the ruins, and an electric car blown from the structure.

In East St. Louis the damage is simply appalling. The railroad yards were all wrecked, cars were tossed here and there, and locomotives were hurled down embankments, and the entire western portion of the city was destroyed. The water works were demolished, and fire soon added terror to the scene. What the wind had left the greedy flames soon licked up, and left what had been a flourishing city, a charred and blackened mass of ruins. The Mayor appealed to St. Louis for assistance, which was quickly sent. Soon after the storm a number of ghoulish vandals were discovered robbing the bodies of the dead, and the militia had to be called out to protect the wrecked property.

As soon as the disaster became known to the outside world, proffers of assistance came pouring in from all over the civilized world, but Mayor Wallbridge quickly responded, that while East St. Louis needed assistance, St. Louis would care for her own. In spite of this, however, liberal donations kept pouring in. The Merchants' Exchange held a meeting the next day, and organized a relief committee. A subscription list was started, and \$12,000 was raised from those present in a few minutes, and this was swelled by Saturday to \$100,000. The City Council appropriated a like sum, and the work of relieving the distress began.

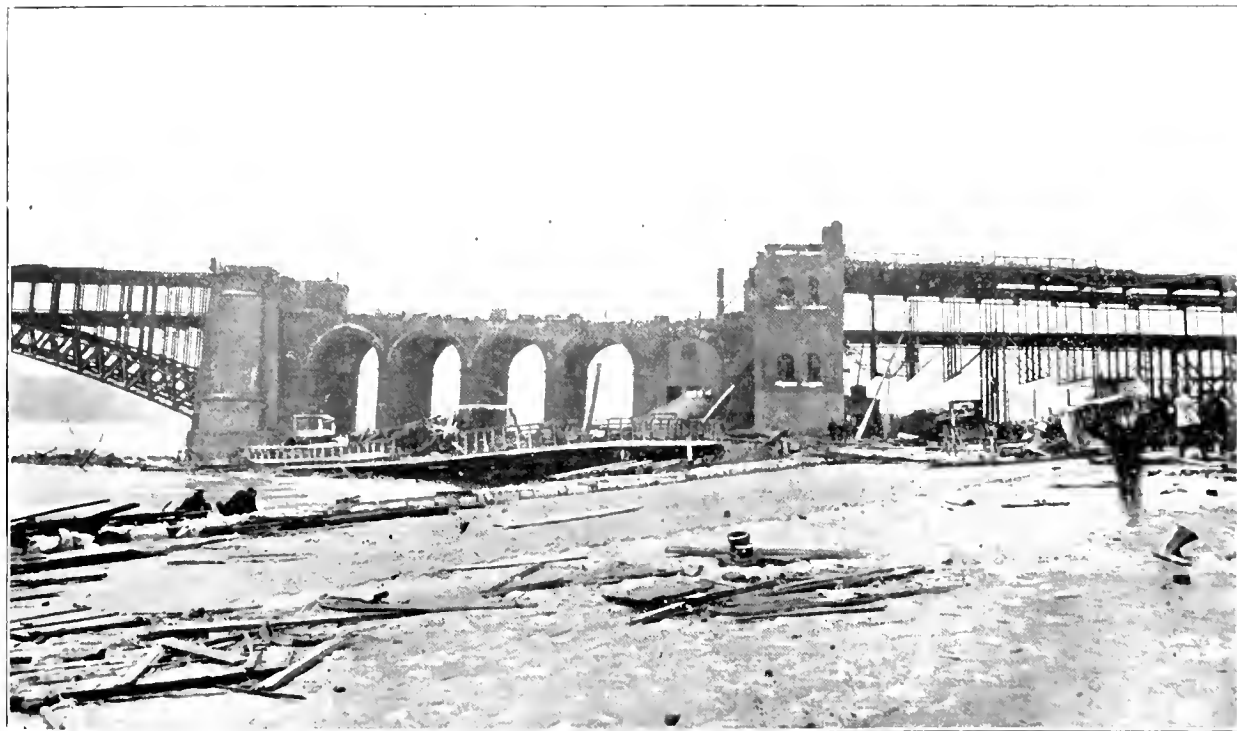
The South Broadway Merchants' Association, although its members were all heavy sufferers, came nobly to the front and organized a relief committee, opened headquarters and commenced at once to provide food and shelter for the homeless and starving. South Broadway was wrecked, but will rise phoenix-like from the ruins to be greater than ever, and become what it should be—the greatest business street in St. Louis.

By daybreak Thursday morning we had a corps of experienced artists on the scene, taking views of the points of greatest destruction, and in less than four days this work was printed and put on the market.

L. F. HAMMER, Jr.,

Photographer,

1534 South Broadway.



EAST APPROACH TO EADS BRIDGE.



LAFAYETTE PARK--LOOKING EAST FROM MISSOURI AVENUE.



LAFAYETTE PARK, CORNER OF LAFAYETTE AND MISSISSIPPI AVENUES. LOOKING WEST.



WASHINGTON STATUE. LAFAYETTE PARK.



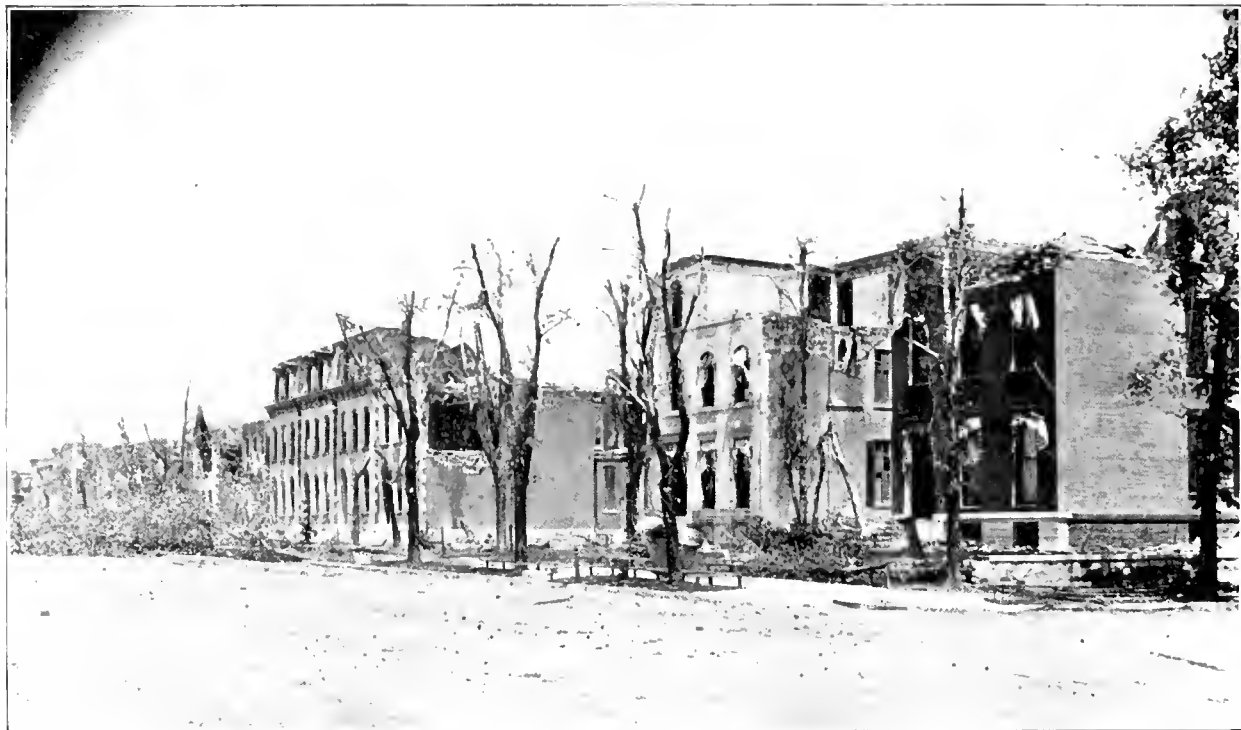
BENTON STATUE, LAFAYETTE PARK.



WAVERLY PLACE BOULEVARD, OPPOSITE LAFAYETTE PARK.



MISSISSIPPI AVENUE -LOOKING NORTH.



MISSISSIPPI AVENUE. EAST SIDE LAFAYETTE PARK.



WEST SIDE MISSOURI AVENUE, LAFAYETTE PARK, SHOWING PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.



UNION CLUB, LAFAYETTE AND JEFFERSON AVENUES.



LAFAYETTE AVENUE, OPPOSITE LAFAYETTE PARK.



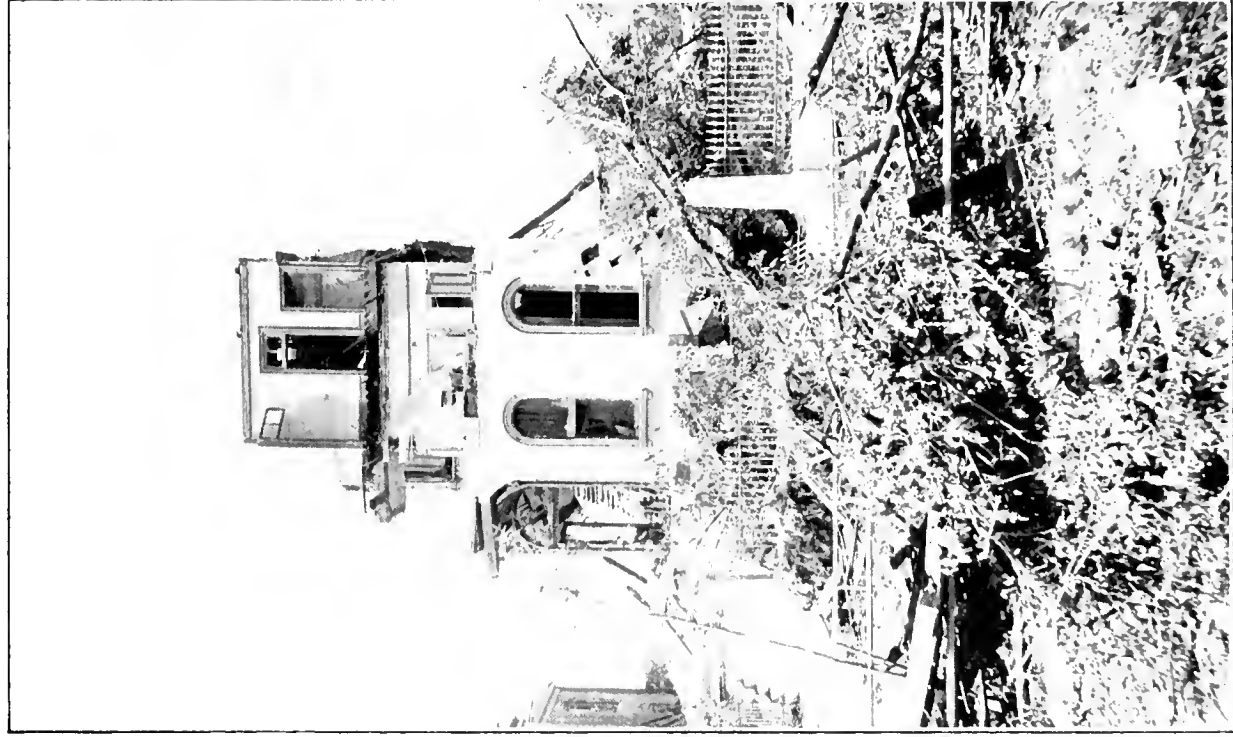
LAFAYETTE AVENUE—LOOKING EAST FROM JEFFERSON AVENUE.



MT. CALVARY PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, LAFAYETTE AND JEFFERSON AVENUES.



REBUILDING, LAFAYETTE AVENUE.



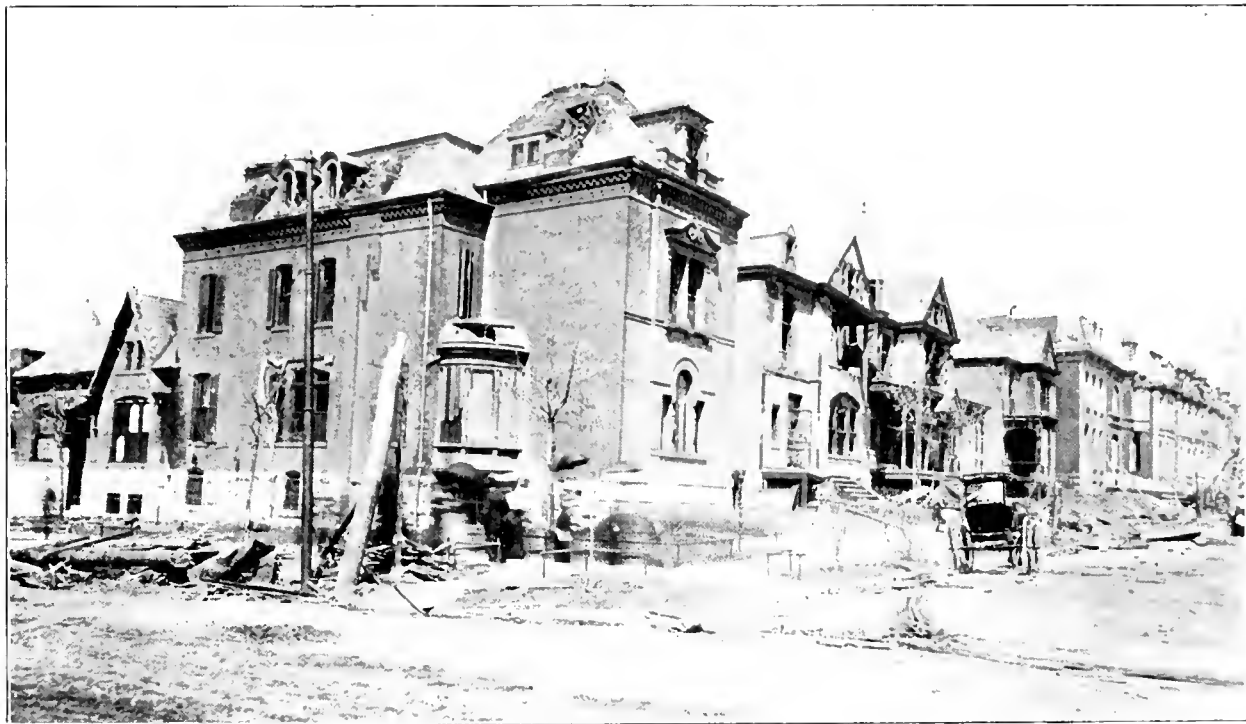
RESIDENCE AUG. NASSE, ESQ., LAFAVETTE AVENUE.



LAFAYETTE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH.



KENNEBEC PLACE—LOOKING WEST TO LAFAYETTE PARK.



WHITEMORE PLACE—LOOKING EAST.



RESIDENCE OF AUG. ABRENS, WHITFORD PLACE.



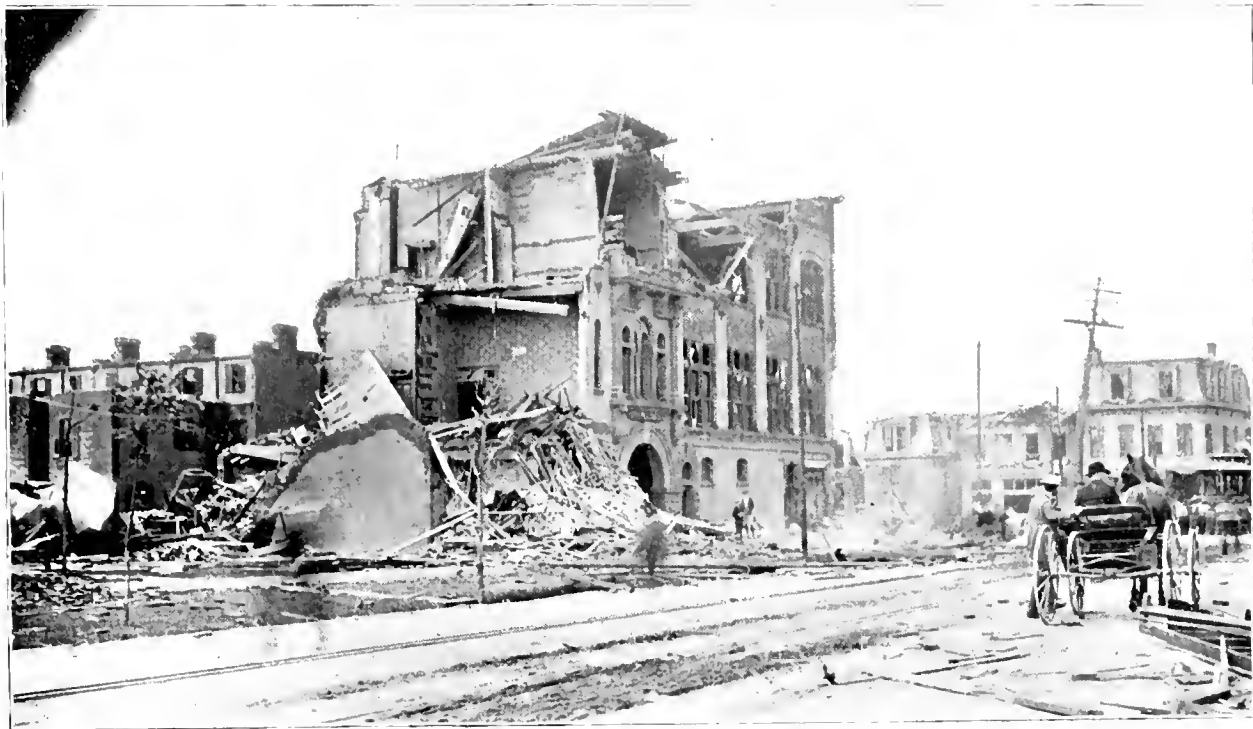
ALBION PLACE—LOOKING EAST.



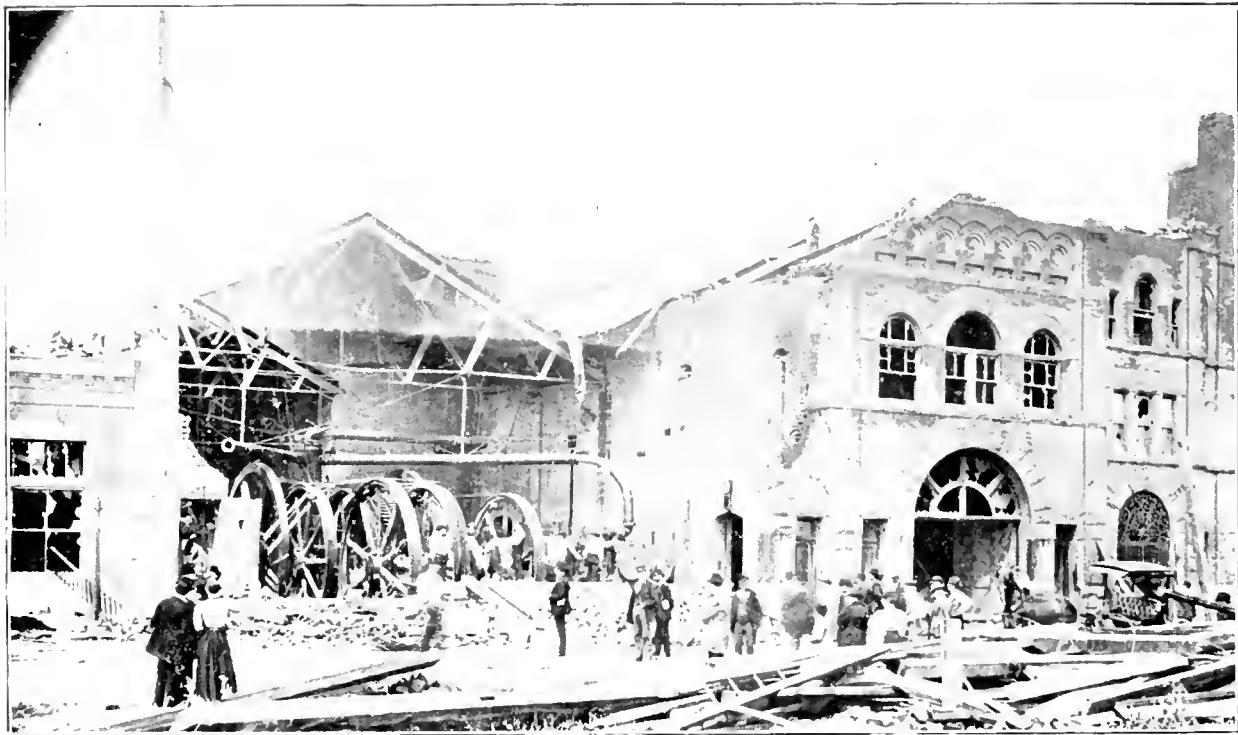
RESIDENCE DR. HAUCK, WHITEMORE PLACE AND JEFFERSON AVENUE.



RESIDENCE DR. STARKLOFF, COMPTON HEIGHTS.



ANCHOR HALL, PARK AND JEFFERSON AVENUES.



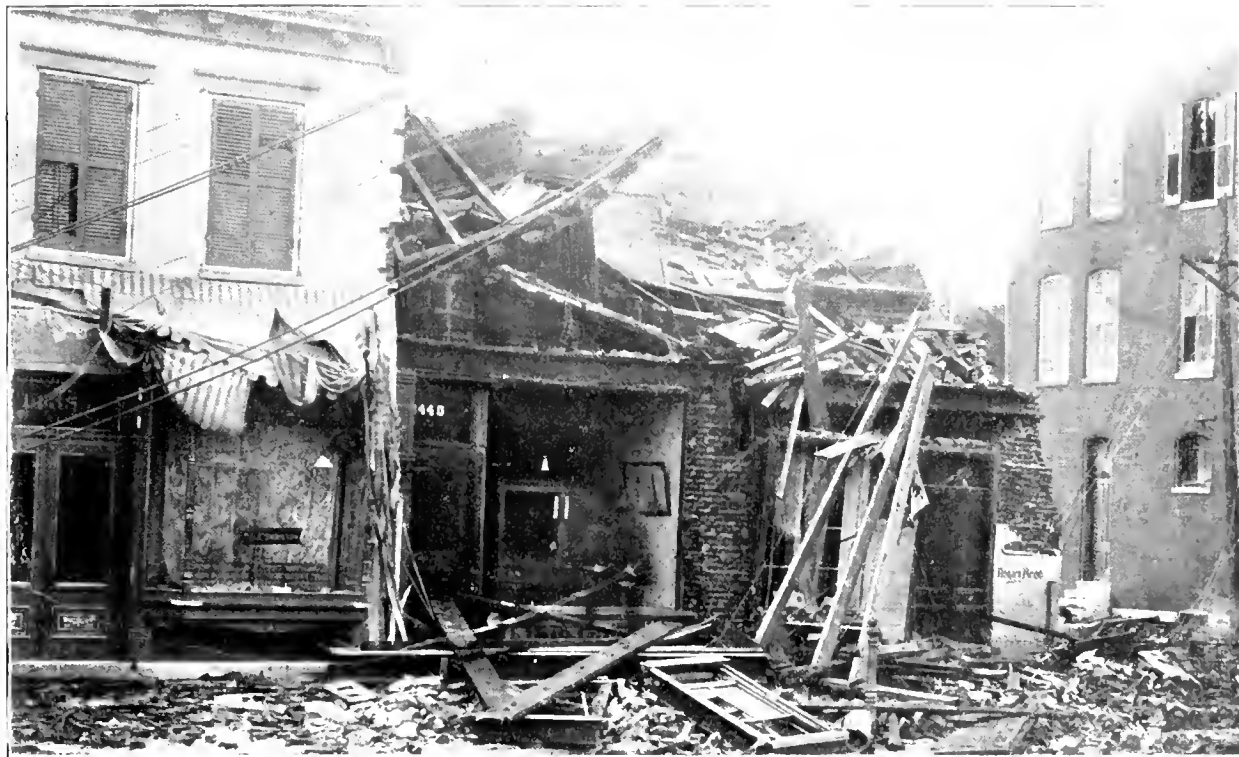
PEOPLES' R. R. POWER HOUSE, PARK AVENUE AND 18TH STREET.



NO. 7 ENGINE HOUSE. PARK AVENUE AND 15TH STREET.



CALIFORNIA AVENUE AND ACCOMAC STREET, WHERE A MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD WERE KILLED.



CORNER SOUTH BROADWAY AND BARRY STREETS.



CORNER SOUTH BROADWAY AND CARROLL - SOUTH BROADWAY MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION HALL.



SOUTH BROADWAY—LOOKING SOUTH FROM CONVENT.



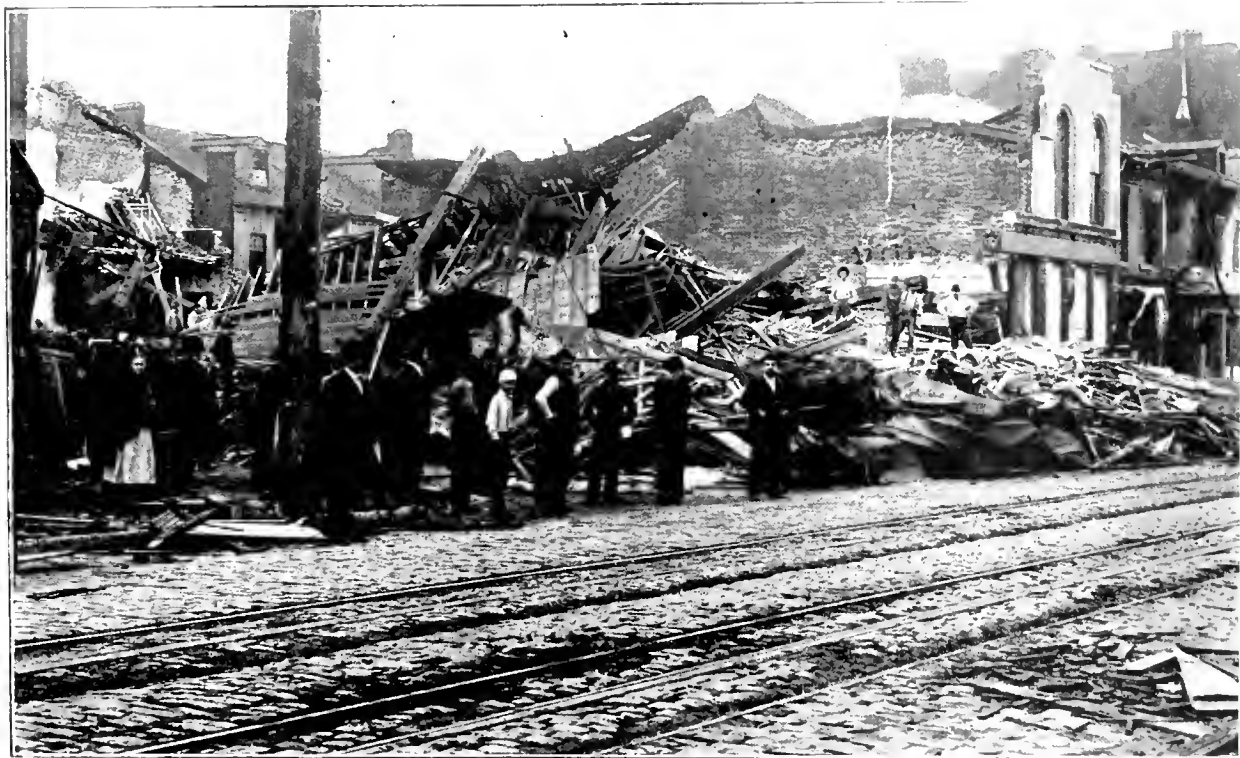
FLOERN BUILDING, BROADWAY AND MILLER.



BROADWAY, LOOKING SOUTH FROM PARKY.



CORNER OF MILLER AND BROADWAY—LOOKING SOUTH.



OTTENS BUILDING, CORNER SOUARD AND SOUTH BROADWAY, WHERE A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WERE KILLED.



BARRY AND BROADWAY—LOOKING WEST—PESTALOZZI SCHOOL HOUSE



MACHENHEIMER BUILDING, CORNER 7TH AND RUTGER, WHERE 27 PEOPLE WERE KILLED.



7TH AND EIGHTH, WHILE 35 PERSONS WERE KILLED.



SOUTHWEST CORNER 7TH AND RUTGER.



7TH AND PARK AVENUE.



9TH AND PARK AVENUE—9TH STREET CAR LINE—3 PEOPLE KILLED.



ST. PETER AND PAUL CHURCH, 7TH AND ALLEN AVENUE.



ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, 9TH AND TAYLOR AVENUE.



ST. PAUL AND TRINITY CHURCH, 9TH AND LAFAYETTE AVENUE, WHERE JANIOR AND FAMILY WERE KILLED.



GERMAN MEMORIAL M. E. CHURCH, JEFFERSON AVENUE AND ACCOMAC STREET.



ST. JOHN OF NEPOMUK, NORTHWEST CORNER 11TH AND SOULARD.



ST. JOHN OF NEPOMUK, NORTHWEST CORNER 11TH AND SOULARD—SCHOOL HOUSE.



UNION DEPOT, R. R. POWER HOUSE, WHERE A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WERE KILLED.



CITY HOSPITAL, CORNER DOLMAN AND CARROLL STREETS



CORNER 4TH AND CHOUTEAU AVENUE.



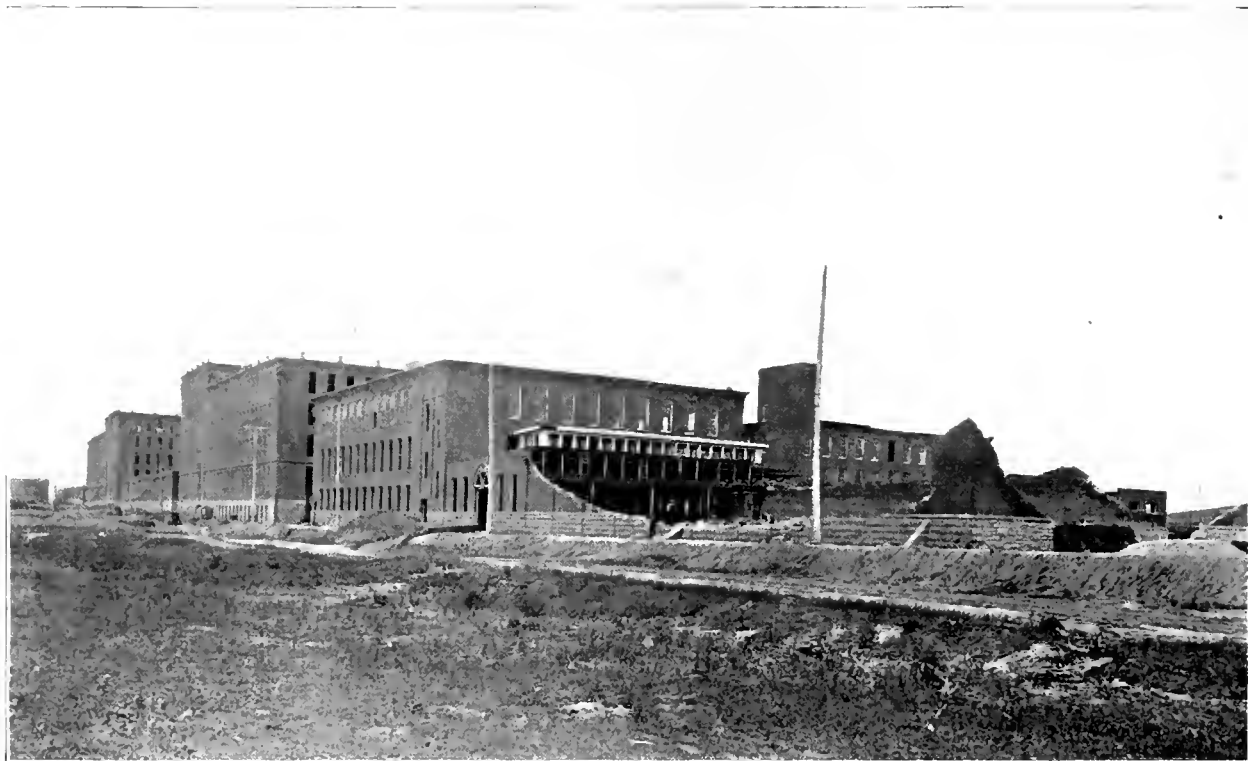
ANNUNCIATION CHURCH, 6TH AND LA SALLE STREET, WHERE REV. J. J. HEAD WAS INJURED.



SCHOENTHALER MANUFACTURING CO., 14TH AND CHOUTEAU AVENUE.



BROWN TOBACCO CO., 18TH AND CHOUTEAU AVENUE.



LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.



FIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.—INTERIOR OF BUILDING.



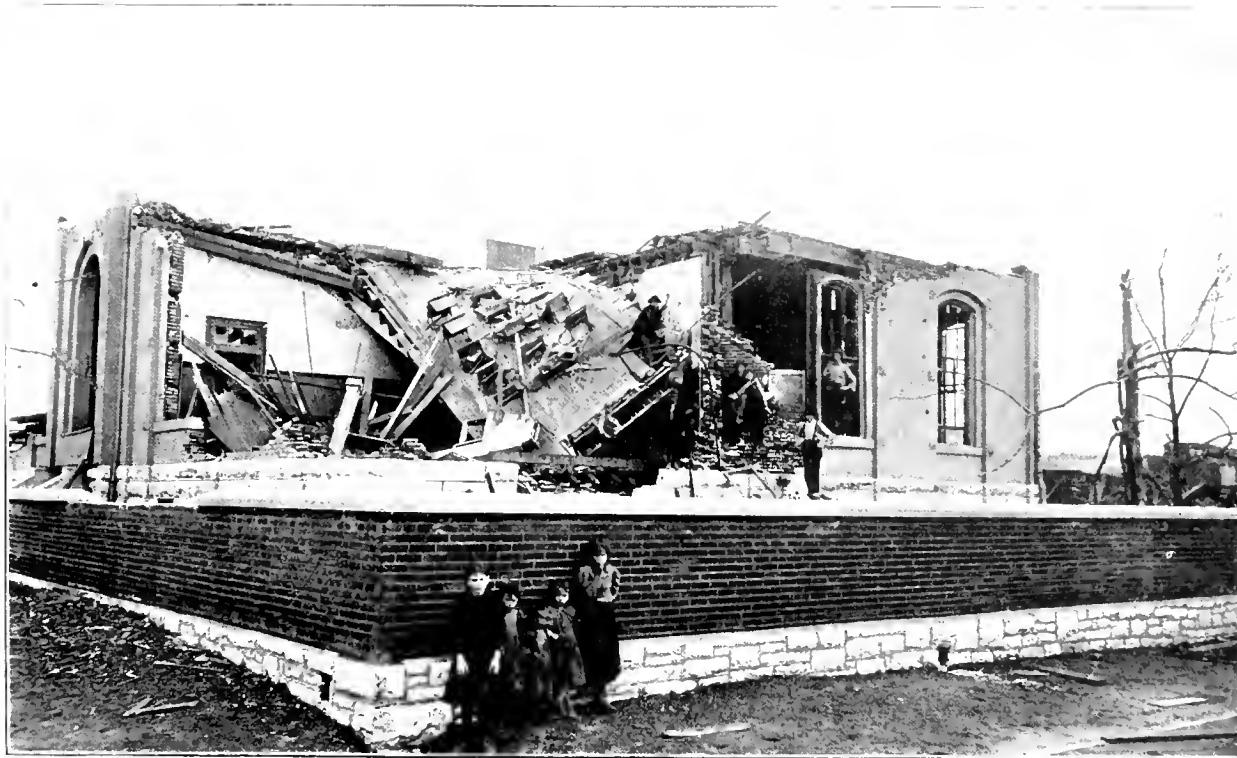
EAST ST. LOUIS TRANSFER CO.'S YARD.



EAST ST. LOUIS ELECTRIC CAR BLOWN FROM THE EADS BRIDGE.



EAST ST. LOUIS POWER HOUSE.

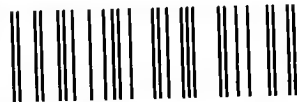


DOUGLAS SCHOOL, EAST ST. LOUIS.



WRECKED STEAMER ON THE MISSISSIPPI.

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